



Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

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Testimony of Russell Williams Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice In Support of Asthma Funding Before the Appropriations Health and Hospitals Subcommittee March 2, 2011

My name is Russell Williams I would like to speak in favor of the 2 year \$150,000 in funding for the Community Asthma Outreach and Education Program of Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, for . The program has been part of the Children's Health Initiative and was previously funded through the Tobacco Settlement Funds.

Asthma is a problem of epidemic proportions. Rates of asthma are increasing in New England, yet not increasing in any other region of the nation. Asthma hospitalization and emergency room rates in urban areas of the state are 2 to 3 times higher than the state average. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic disease. Asthma is a leading cause of absenteeism at work for those that who have asthma or for parents of children who have asthma.

The Community Asthma Outreach and Education Program identifies the people who are most likely to end up in the emergency room or admitted to the hospital due to asthma and encourages them to seek help before they are hospitalized or rushed to the emergency room. Specifically we aim to educate low-income people, people on Medicaid, Blacks and Latinos, and the uninsured to identify uncontrolled asthma symptoms in their family and friends and encourage them to seek medical care before the symptoms become severe.

The program has several components. One is the Asthma Speakers Bureau, a grassroots group of trained lay people who give presentations in churches, schools, public housing projects and homeless shelters explaining the symptoms and triggers of asthma to large numbers of people who either have or are likely to know of someone with undiagnosed asthma. The speakers also explain how to avoid asthma attacks that can result in emergency room visits or hospitalization by avoiding asthma triggers and seeking out medical assistance early. The Asthma Speakers Bureaus are based in Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford.

In addition to the Speaker's Bureau, other components of the Community Asthma Outreach and Education Campaign include radio and TV promotion statewide; posters in Bridgeport and New Haven; as well as bus placards and billboards in Bridgeport.

This effectiveness of the Asthma Outreach and Education Program has been borne out by a recent random telephone survey of 300 Bridgeport residents. Two thirds of the respondents

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